



Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program (MMHSRP)

Public Scoping Meeting
Santa Barbara, CA
January 24, 2006

Welcome & Introduction

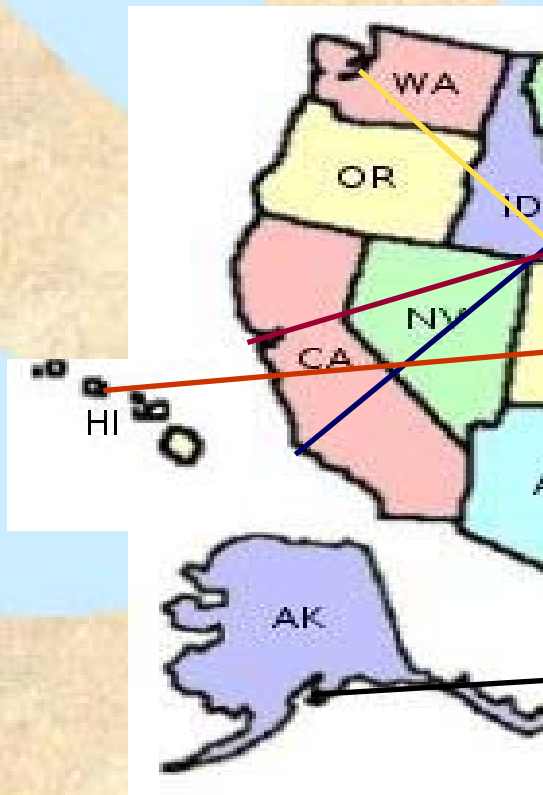




Scoping Meetings: Purpose

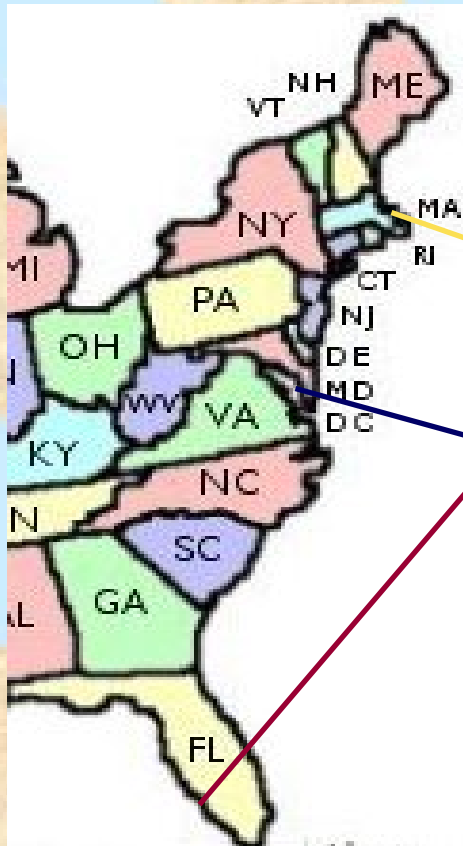
- ***To Allow for Early Public Notification of a Proposed Federal Action or Actions***
- Provides the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) the Opportunity to Present the Proposed Action(s)
- Seeks Input on Scope of EIS

Scoping Meetings: West Coast Locations



- January 24:
Santa Barbara, CA
- January 25:
San Francisco, CA
- January 27:
Honolulu, HI
- January 30:
Seattle, WA
- February 1:
Anchorage, AK

Scoping Meetings: East Coast Locations



- February 7:
St. Petersburg, FL
- February 13:
Boston, MA
- February 17:
Silver Spring, MD



Scoping Meetings: Agenda

- Information on Scoping
- Background on the NEPA Process
- Overview of the MMHSRP
- Review of the Proposed Actions and Alternatives
- Public Comment Period
 - Alternatives, environmental concerns, potential mitigation measures to be addressed.

Scoping Meetings: Layout

- Registration Area
- Staffed Exhibit Area
- NMFS Formal Presentation
- Oral Comment Period
- Written Comments Accepted



- 1. Please Sign In at the Registration Table to Present Oral Comments**
- 2. Written Comments May Be Turned In Tonight**
- 3. Transcripts of Tonight's Meeting Are Being Captured by a Court Reporter**





The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Process

**Ms. Sarah Howlett
MMHSRP**

Purposes of NEPA

- Encourage harmony between man and the environment
- Promote efforts to prevent or eliminate damage to the environment
- Enrich understanding of important ecological systems and natural resources

Requirements of NEPA

- Analysis of potential environmental impacts of a proposed Federal agency action.
 - **Consider environmental consequences during decision-making to reduce, prevent, or eliminate environmental damage.**
 - **Provide for public involvement in key phases of the EIS process.**

NEPA DOES NOT: Dictate the decision to be made by NMFS.



Why an EIS?

- NOAA policy to prepare an EIS for agency actions that:
 - **are the subject of significant public controversy based on potential environmental consequences**
 - **have uncertain environmental impacts or risks**
 - **establish a precedent or decision in principle about future proposals**
 - **may result in cumulatively significant impacts**
 - **may have adverse effects upon endangered or threatened species or their habitats**

Benefits of an EIS

- Allows for a programmatic analysis of the MMHSRP
- Allows for an assessment of cumulative impacts
- Eliminates the need to conduct individual NEPA analyses of MMHSRP activities

Why Do an EIS Now?

- Current MMPA/ESA permit issued to the MMHSRP will expire on June 30, 2007.
- NEPA analysis of the activities covered under the permit must be completed prior to issuance of a new permit.
- Needed to finalize the interim standards provided in the Policies and Practices manual.

Components of an EIS

- Purpose and Need
- Proposed Action and Alternatives
- Affected Environment
- Potential Environmental Consequences and Mitigations
- Consideration of Public Input and Comments



Environmental Resources Typically Considered in an EIS

- **Fish & Wildlife**
 - **Protected Species**
 - **Non-protected Species**
- **Protected & Sensitive Habitats**
- **Water Quality**
- **Air Quality**
- **Human Health and Safety**
- **Public Services**
- **Treaty Rights**
- **Socioeconomics and Tourism**
- **Noise**
- **Cultural Resources**
- **Geology and Soils**
- **Environmental Justice**
- **Aesthetics**
- **Coastal Zone Management**
- **Cumulative Impacts**



The EIS Process

- **Notice of Intent (NOI) published**
- **Scoping**
- **Draft EIS published**
 - **45-day comment period and public hearings**
- **Final EIS published**
- **Record of Decision (ROD)**
 - **Issued 30 days after Final EIS**



Public Input Opportunities

- **Participate in a scoping meeting**
- **Identify specific issues**
- **Submit comments**
- **Sign up on the mailing list**
- **Review and comment on the Draft EIS**
- **Participate in a public hearing**
- **Review the Final EIS**



Tentative EIS Schedule

Phase	Schedule
Scoping	January – February 2006
Development Draft EIS Complete	March 2006 – August 2006 September 2006
Comment Public Hearings	September 2006 – October 2006 November 2006
Decision Final EIS Complete Record of Decision	December 2006 – May 2007 May 2007 June 2007

MMHSRP Proposed Action(s) and Alternatives

Ms. Sarah Wilkin
MMHSRP

About the MMHSRP

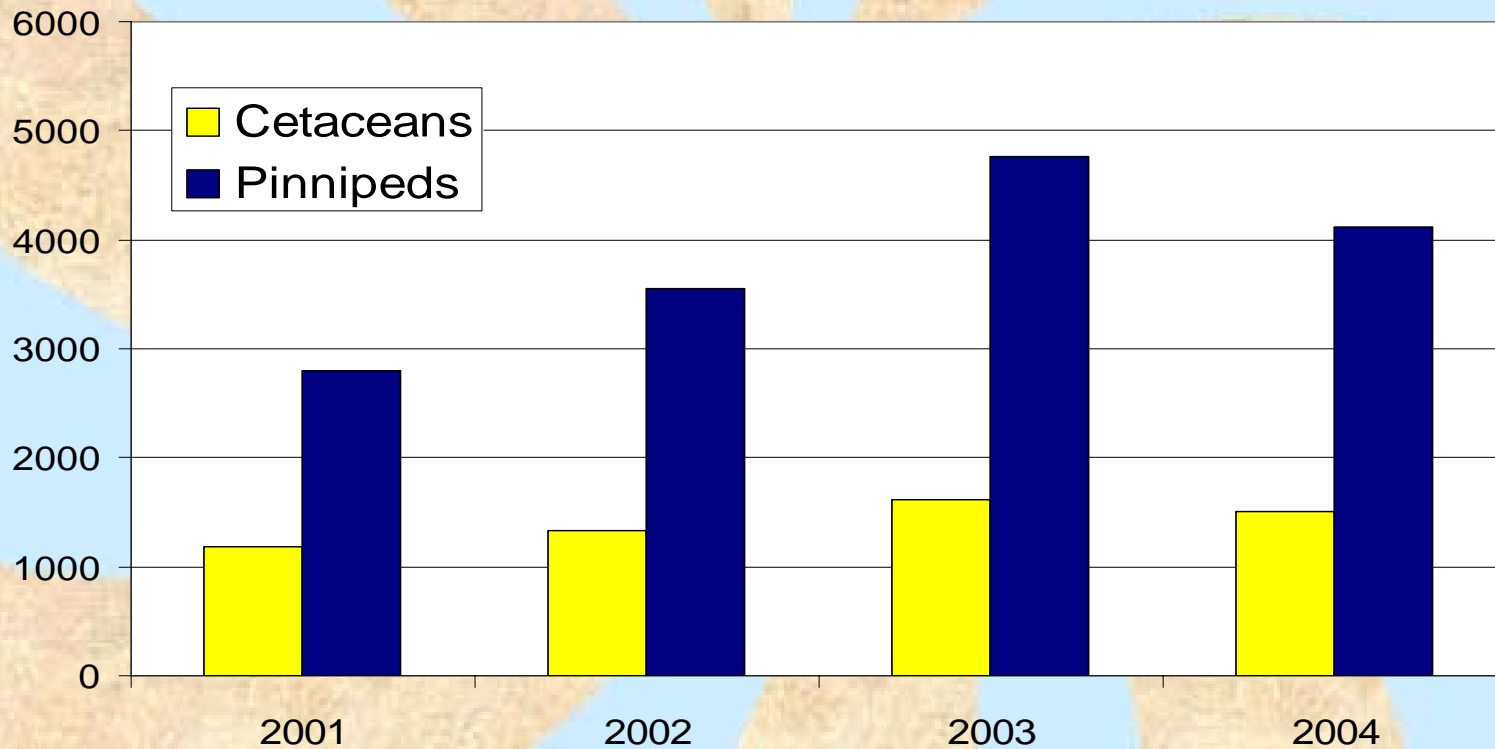
- **Established under Title IV of the MMPA**
- **Goals and Purposes:**
 - **Facilitate the collection and dissemination of reference data on the health and health trends of marine mammals and populations in the wild**
 - **Correlate the health of marine mammals to physical, chemical and biological parameters**
 - **Coordinate effective responses to unusual mortality events**

Components

- **Marine Mammal Stranding Network**
- **Marine Mammal Disentanglement Network**
- **John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program**
- **Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Event and Emergency Response Program**
- **MMHSRP Information Management Program**
- **Marine Mammal Health Biomonitoring, Research, Development and Banking Programs**

Stranding Network

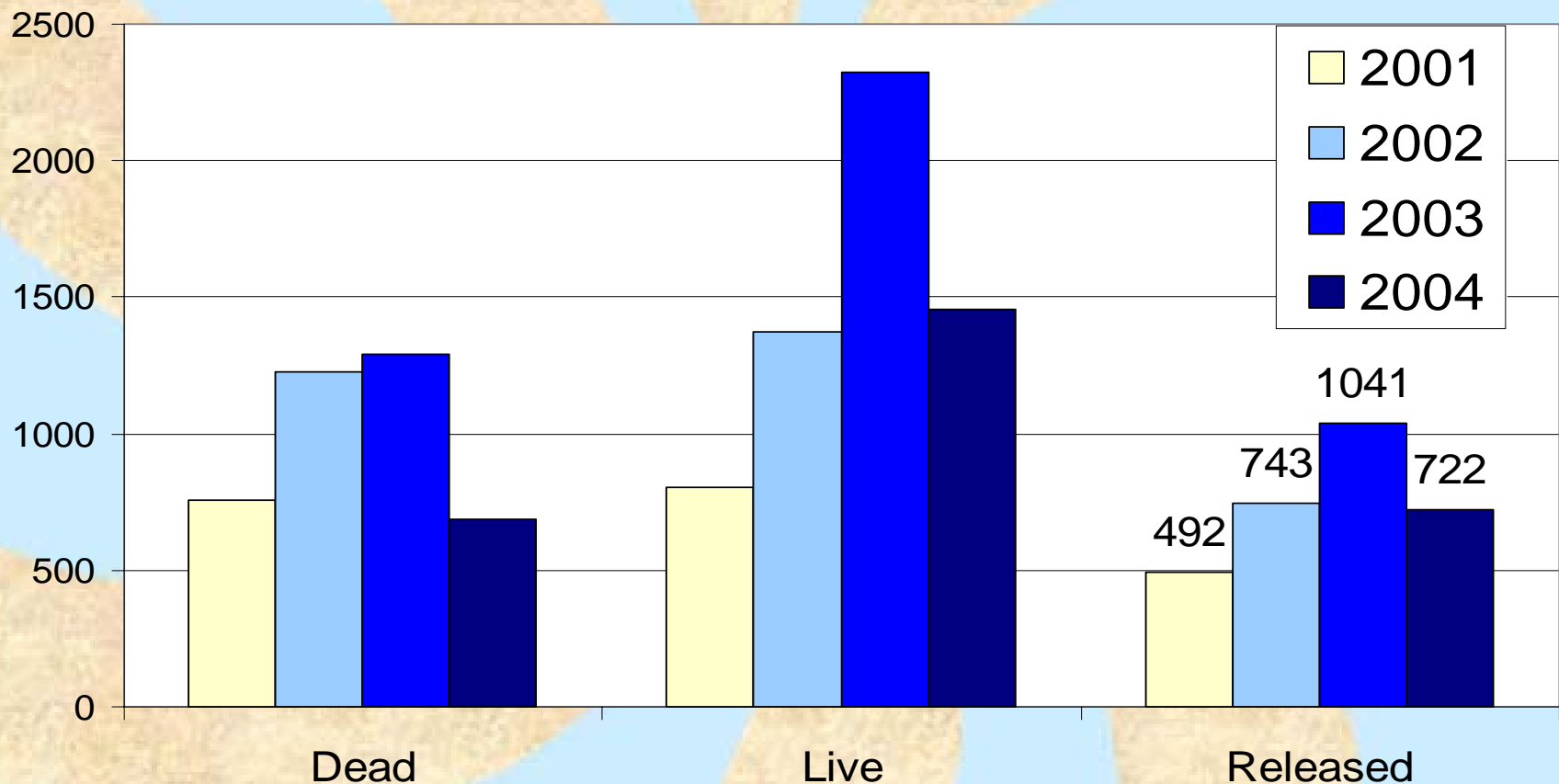
- Total US Strandings (Level A) 2001-04**





Southwest Region Stranding Network

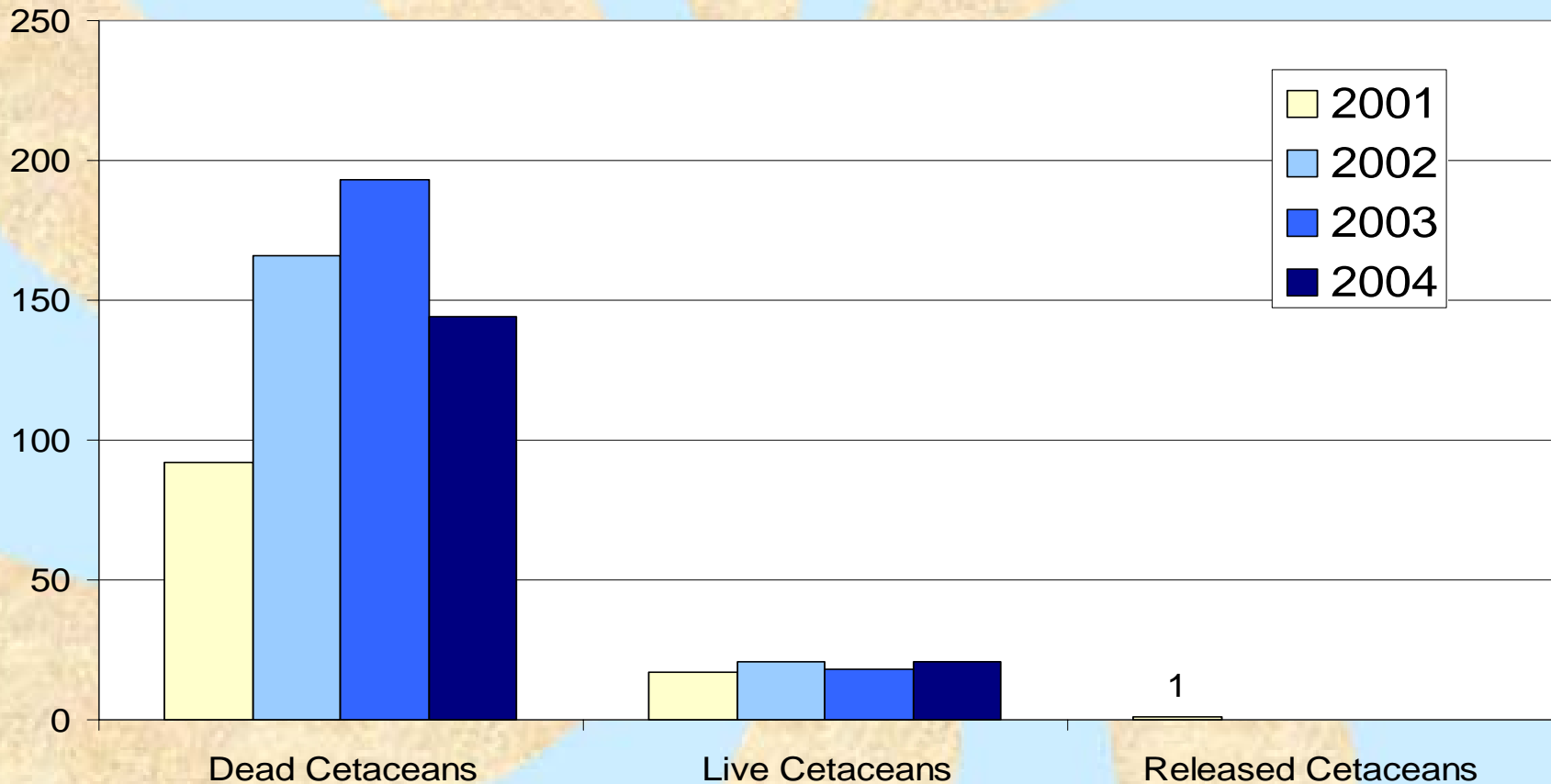
SWR Pinniped Strandings 01-04





Southwest Region Stranding Network

SWR Cetacean Strandings 01-04





Purpose and Need

- **Purpose**

- **To respond to marine mammals in distress, including those stranded, entangled and out of habitat, and to answer research and management questions related to marine mammal health**



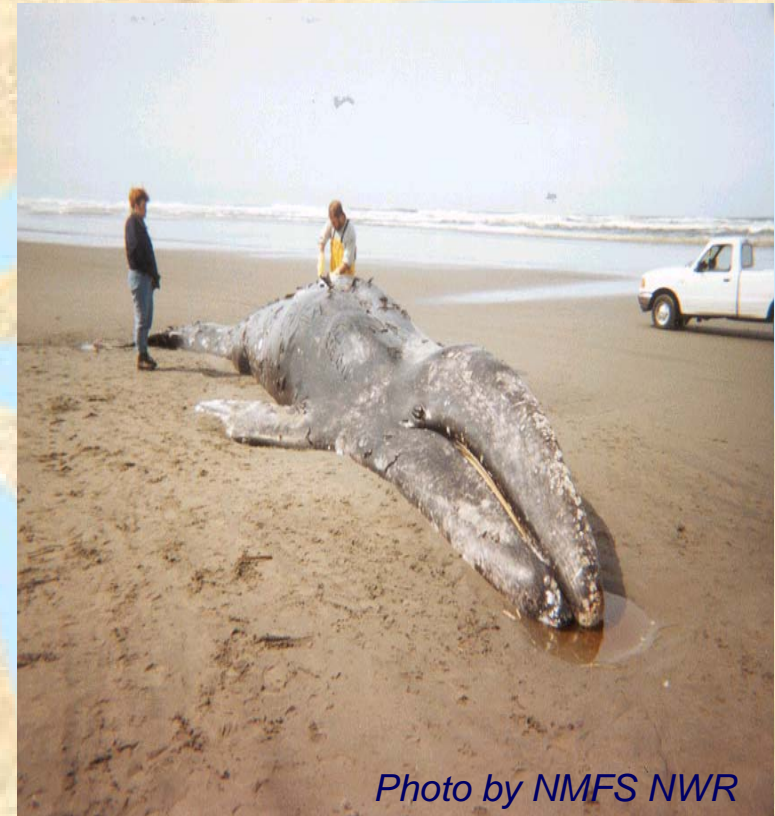
Purpose and Need

- **Need**

- **To operate the MMHSRP effectively and efficiently, making the best use of available limited resources;**
- **to collect the necessary data on marine mammal health and health trends to meet information needs for appropriate conservation and management; and**
- **to ensure that human and animal health and safety is always a high priority.**

Proposed Action

- **Issuance of Policies and Best Practices for Marine Mammal Stranding Response, Rehabilitation, and Release**
- **Issuance of MMHSRP ESA/MMPA Permit**
- **Stranding Agreements issued or renewed on case-by-case basis**
- **Other day-to-day operations would continue (response, rehabilitation, release determinations, etc.)**



Action Alternative: Alternative 1

(as listed in the FR)

- **Issuance of Policies and Best Practices for Marine Mammal Stranding Response, Rehabilitation and Release (Policies and Practices)**
- **Issuance of MMHSRP MMPA/ESA permit and continuation of biomonitoring and research**
- **Stranding Agreements (formerly LOAs) would continue to be issued or renewed on a case-by-case basis as necessary;**
- **Disentanglement Network would continue under the MMHSRP permit**





No Action Alternative: Alternative 2

(as listed in the FR)

- **Policies and Practices would not be issued**
- **No new or renewal Stranding Agreements would be issued or extended**
- **No new MMHSRP permit**
- **No extension of contracts/authorization for disentanglement partners**
- **No biomonitoring or research activities**
- **As Stranding and Disentanglement Agreements expired, the Network would cease to function**
- **Conflict with statutory mandates under MMPA Title IV**



Status Quo Alternative: Alternative 3

(as listed in the FR)

- **Policies and Practices would not be issued**
- **Current Stranding Agreements would be renewed as currently issued**
- **MMHSRP permit renewed or reissued as currently written; current research activities could continue**
- **Current disentanglement partners would continue**
- **New SA and disentanglement applications considered on a case-by-case basis**
- **The Network would continue to function at its current level**
- **Adaptive changes may be precluded**



Alternatives that May Be Eliminated

(as listed in the FR)

- **Biomonitoring/Research only**
- **Stranding Response only (no Rehabilitation)**
- **Cetaceans Only**
- **ESA-listed marine mammals Only**



Proposed for Scoping: Alternatives by Activity

- **Response**
- **Carcass Disposal/Euthanasia**
- **Rehabilitation**
- **Release of Rehabilitated Animals**
- **Disentanglement**
- **Biomonitoring and Research Activities**



Alternatives by Activity: Stranding Response

- **No Action Alternative: Stranding Agreements expire**
- **Status Quo Alternative: current SAs are renewed**
- **Response curtailed immediately**
- **Response to some animals required, others optional**
 - **Cetaceans required, pinnipeds optional**
 - **ESA-Listed required, non-listed optional**
 - **Species below OSP or unknown required, species at or above optional**
- **Response to some animals authorized, others not**
 - **Cetaceans authorized, pinnipeds not**
 - **ESA-Listed authorized, non-listed not**
 - **Species below OSP or unknown status authorized, species at or above not**

con't next slide



Alternatives by Activity: Stranding Response

- No Action Alternative: Stranding Agreements expire
- Status Quo Alternative: current SAs are renewed
- Response curtailed immediately
- Response to some animals required, others optional
- Response to some animals authorized, others not
- **SA issued to any applicants after review**
- **SA Criteria implemented as proposed; only applicants meeting minimum criteria will be issued a SA**
- **SA Criteria revised and implemented**



Alternatives by Activity: Carcass Disposal / Euthanasia

– No Action Alternative

- Stranding Agreements expire; animals will no longer be responded to and will be left on beach

– Status Quo Alternative

- current SAs are renewed and current methods of carcass disposal continue

– All animals buried on site

– All animals transported off-site for disposal

- Landfill, incinerator, towed to sea,

– No animals chemically euthanatized

– Chemically euthanatized animals transported off-site; others left, buried or transported as feasible

Alternatives by Activity: Rehabilitation

- **No Action Alternative**
 - **Stranding Agreements expire; animals will no longer be rehabilitated after expiration**
- **Status Quo Alternative**
 - **Current SAs are renewed and current rehabilitation activities continue**
- **Immediate cessation of rehabilitation**
 - **All animals left on beach, euthanized on beach, or translocated**

Con't next slide



Alternatives by Activity: Rehabilitation *con't*

- No Action
- Status Quo
- Immediate Cessation of Rehabilitation
- **Rehabilitation of some animals required, others optional**
 - Cetaceans required, pinnipeds optional
 - ESA-Listed required, non-listed optional
 - Species below OSP or unknown required, species at or above optional
- **Rehabilitation of some animals authorized, others not**
 - Cetaceans authorized, pinnipeds not
 - ESA-Listed authorized, non-listed not
 - Species below OSP or unknown required, species at or above optional
- **Rehabilitation Facility Guidelines implemented as proposed**
- **Rehabilitation Facility Guidelines modified and implemented**



Alternatives by Activity: Release

– No Action Alternative

- **Stranding Agreements expire; animals will no longer be rehabilitated (and therefore released) after expiration**

– Status Quo Alternative

- **Current SAs are renewed and current rehabilitation and release activities continue**

– All animals released

- **Animals that are not release candidates are not taken into rehabilitation or are euthanized**

con't next slide



Alternatives by Activity: Release *con't*

- No Action
- Status Quo
- No Release
- All Released
- **Release of some animals required, others optional**
 - Cetaceans required, pinnipeds optional
 - ESA-Listed required, non-listed optional
 - Species below OSP or unknown required, species at or above optional
- **Release of some animals authorized, others not**
 - Cetaceans authorized, pinnipeds not
 - ESA-Listed authorized, non-listed not
 - Species below OSP or unknown required, species at or above optional
- **Release Criteria implemented as proposed**
- **Release Criteria modified and implemented**



Alternatives by Activity: Disentanglement

– No Action

- Contracts/agreements with disentanglement organizations and MMPA/ESA permit allowed to expire; no further response

– Status Quo

- Current contracts, agreements and permit maintained; no modifications as technology improves or addition of members

– Disentanglement of some animals authorized, others not

- Cetaceans authorized, pinnipeds not
- ESA-Listed authorized, non-listed not
- Species below OSP or unknown required, species at or above optional

– Implementation of Disentanglement Guidelines, training prerequisites for Disentanglement Network participants

– Modification of Disentanglement Guidelines

Alternatives by Activity: Biomonitoring

- **No Action**
 - Permit allowed to expire; biomonitoring projects would end
- **Status Quo**
 - Renewal of permit; continuation of current projects, no new projects
- **No Health Assessment Captures**
 - Biomonitoring of tissues collected from stranded animals, bycatch and subsistence only
- **No Tissue Banking**
 - Tissues used for immediate analyses; no retrospective studies

Specific Information Requested by NMFS

- **To identify environmental concerns**
 - **Activities of the MMHSRP resulting in environmental impacts**
 - **Indirect and cumulative impacts**

- **To help define the alternatives and potential mitigation measures**



Types of Activities

- What sort of activities should be conducted on a local, regional and national level in response to stranded, entangled, sick, injured and other marine mammals in distress?**
- Are there critical research or management needs that may be met by stranding investigations, rehabilitation, disentanglement, or health-related research and biomonitoring activities? Are these needs currently being met? If not, what are they, how are they likely to benefit the marine mammal species or the ecosystems in which they live and what should be done to meet them?**

Level of Response Effort

- **Should there be different standards or levels of MMHSRP effort for different species or groups of species?**
- **How should the species be divided?**
 - **Cetaceans/pinnipeds**
 - **ESA-listed/non-listed**
 - **Population status (OSP, increasing, decreasing, etc.)**
- **If so, how should NMFS set these standards or levels of effort?**

Organization and qualifications

- **Is the current organization of the national stranding and health assessment networks adequate?**
 - local, state, regional, ecosystem, national levels
- **What changes would make the organization more effective?**
- **What should the minimum qualifications of an individual or organization be prior to becoming an SA holder or disentanglement participant?**
- **What should the requirements be for continued participation in the networks? Should there be a certification or licensing process? What training should be required?**

Effects of Activities

- Are there any potential environmental impacts that we have not identified?**
- Are public and animal health and safety needs adequately addressed by the current MMHSRP?**
- Are the current release criteria adequate to protect wild populations from introduced diseases?**
- Are there any other relevant issues or data NMFS should consider in this analysis? If so, please provide it or a reference for it.**

Oral Comments

Oral Comment
Time

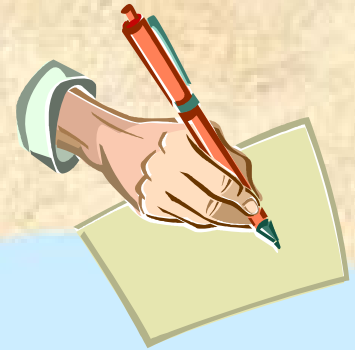


Oral Comments

- Please sign in at the registration table
- You will have 4 minutes to offer your oral comments
- This meeting is being recorded by a court reporter to ensure an accurate and complete record of your comments



Written Comments



Your Options Are:

1. Hand in prepared written comments tonight,
2. Use written comment sheets provided tonight and turn them in, and/or
3. Submit written comments for receipt by February 28, 2006 to:

**P. Michael Payne; Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Division;
Office of Protected Resources, NMFS; 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13635
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3226
Email: mmhsrpeis.comments@noaa.gov
Fax: 301-427-2584**



Additional Information

1. Information available for review at public libraries
2. Available on NMFS web page
3. To receive future copies of the Draft EIS, please register here and/or check availability on the website.

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/eis.htm>

5 Minute Break



Collating Sign-Up Information for
Public Oral Comments
